





take a BOW!

Congratulations to Tim Allen and
the talented cast and crew of

last **MAN** standing
on **100** fantastic
Episodes...
and counting.

With appreciation,
Dana Walden, Gary Newman, Paul Lee
and everyone at TCFTV and ABC



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The show's cast at the series' 100th episode celebration Jan. 12 on the Studio City set.

How Last Man Standing Gets Away With It

ABC's durable sitcom has beaten the odds thanks to its lovably acerbic star, Tim Allen, as he celebrates the 'blessing' of a second TV hit and sounds off on Trump (he likes him) and Hillary: 'The Clintons are like herpes: Just when you think they're gone, they show up again' **BY BRYN ELISE SANDBERG**

YOU'VE HEARD the old saying, 'Dying is easy, comedy is hard,' said Fox TV Group chairman Gary Newman at a cake-cutting ceremony in January celebrating the longevity of his studio's Tim Allen starrer *Last Man Standing*. "Well, nothing is harder than broadcast comedy, and our show defied the odds." In the 2010-11 TV season, the four networks ordered a total of 42 comedy pilots. Of those, 16 were picked up to series. Now, only three remain on the air. And of those three, only one stars the guy who voiced Buzz Lightyear and made *Home Improvement* one of the biggest sitcom hits of the '90s (others in that club include *Seinfeld* and *Roseanne*).

As the ABC comedy prepares to mark its 100th episode threshold Jan. 29, its viewership is holding steady at 8.7 million, making the 20th Century Fox TV-produced multicam the No. 1 show in its Friday slot. *THR* sat down with the always irascible Tim Allen, 62, and talked about his return to network TV, how he relates to his right wing character and why he thinks Donald Trump "might be able to do the stuff that needs fixing."

Why did you return to network TV?

I had people approach me. But I'm no idiot. I said, "Show me what you got." Once was great with *Home Improvement*, but to have it twice is a blessing. CBS and ABC both pitched shows, and they were all great on their own, but it was almost a mirror of *Home Improvement*. So it took a couple of late-night sessions with [creator] Jack Burditt, who wrote the pilot off of our ideas.

The development process wasn't exactly smooth sailing, right?

It was difficult. I'm an executive

producer and the alleged star of the show, so I was a big gorilla in the room, and a lot of [Burditt's writers] were not used to that. It wasn't my way or the highway, but there were a lot of struggles of very strong personalities to get it where it is.

Whose idea was it for Mike Baxter to have loud, conservative political views?

I brought that to the table. I wanted to be provocative. Mike Baxter is an educated Archie Bunker.

Do you have more comedic leeway now than you did on *Home Improvement*?

Definitely. But you know what? I've earned it. I don't say that lightly. I've been on a successful show and learned from the best. But I find *Last Man Standing* actually rougher than *Home Improvement*. We're getting away with a lot of stuff. I'm really shocked. This is a meaner, sharper comedy than I'm used to. There's a lot of times our very liberal writing staff will come up with stuff that even my character would say, "I don't know if I can say that."

How much is playing this right-leaning character an outlet for you to express your own political views?

It's getting more and more comfortable. These guys know me so well that they're writing stuff that is exactly what I would've said. It's a marvelous thing when you have liberal people writing for [a show like this]. I believe Stephen Colbert was like that. He was pretending to be a conservative, I think. Someone said that. I never got that, but maybe I didn't watch it enough.

Has the line between you and your character blurred over the years?

It definitely has. If you go see my stand-up at the Mirage in Vegas —



From left: Amanda Fuller, Molly Ephraim, Nancy Travis and Kaitlyn Dever.

I'm on a concert tour this year, as I have been for 30 years — it tends to be very angry about self-reliance. I'm not going to say it's conservative, but it certainly is not left. For most of my life, I've been taxed above 38 percent. When you're a young guy working the road and literally close to half of what you make goes to people who don't help you at all but just bitch about it the whole time, that's where I come from. I come from "no taxation without representation," and it manifests itself in very peculiar points of view.

How are you different from Mike?

He's milder than I am. You wouldn't want to hear what I have to say. Escalate Mike Baxter with profanity and that's basically me. He's much more tepid because he's a business owner. Mike Baxter is calmed way down, and I'm definitely not that guy.

What riles you up the most?

Unearned responses, unearned praise, unearned income: I have opinions about it. When you watch the debates, on both sides you see clowns who say shit that ain't ever going to happen, but lately one party is the free shit party. They are just telling people they're going to get all sorts of free shit. When you say you're going to get free education, free health care — f—, free brown loafers — of course everybody's going to say yes to that. But you don't mean it. That's how

you rack up debt, and debt is killing us. Whatever party is going to get us out of debt is my party.

What party is that?

I met with John Kasich, a great guy. He's a Republican that Democrats would vote for, a Republican the Republicans should respect. But he's not saying provocative things. He's not glib enough or he doesn't speak well enough because somehow he doesn't get traction. So we'll end up with somebody scary.

Who scares you?

Well, we asked the female writing staff if they'd vote for Hillary just because she's a woman, and they all said yes. So then the question was, "So if Sarah Palin was the female?" They all choked and they had to say, "Oh God, yes, we'd vote for her." I didn't quite buy it. I don't think you should vote for somebody just because they're tall, thin, yellow, green, whatever. Bernie Sanders, as nice a guy as he is, none of that shit's going to happen. And Trump can't send everybody to Mexico or whatever the f— he said. But give that guy the roads, bridges, infrastructure, power grid — just have him fix that shit for four years. He's good at that. And he's a businessman so he understands how debt load works. Forget the stupid shit he says about immigrants. That's just ignorant. But he might be able to do the stuff that really needs fixing.

So you're not opposed to Trump?

I'm not opposed to anybody if their workload matches their bullshit load.

Why has the show gone after Hillary but not Trump?

It's a little surprising to me. We have a very liberal writing staff, so I'm surprised they haven't taken a shot at him. But we're not sure he's going to last, whereas the Clintons are like herpes: Just when you think they're gone, they show up again.

Didn't you try a bit about Obama raising the communist flag at the White House that never made it to air?

We got network notes saying you can't call the president a communist. So, of course, I really wanted to. I do it in rehearsal all day long. **TJR**



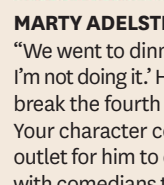
THE EXECS AND CREATIVES WHO HELPED GET *STANDING ON ITS FEET*

How the ABC sitcom made it on the air and survived five seasons, multiple showrunners and a lot of politics



JACK BURDITT (creator)

"When I was working on *30 Rock*, my agent called me and said that Tim Allen was interested in doing a sitcom again and that he wanted to do a show about a guy trying to remain a guy in a world surrounded by women. Tina Fey and Robert Carlock both said: 'You're really an idiot if you don't do this. This guy is going to get you on the air.'"



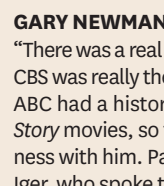
MARTY ADELSTEIN (executive producer)

"We went to dinner with Tim, and he says, 'I love the script, but I'm not doing it.' He wanted to do something different, which was break the fourth wall. I said: 'My kids have their own video blog. Your character could have a vlog.' And it became a really good outlet for him to express his opinions. If you look at all the shows with comedians that work, they're pretty true to who they are."



BECKY CLEMENTS (executive producer)

"We went through a long development process addressing his concerns. Honestly, when you're someone like Tim Allen, who has done many things professionally very successfully, the possibility of being less than successful is a daunting seat to be in. It was nerve-racking for him to put himself out there again in the world and potentially not have another *Home Improvement*."



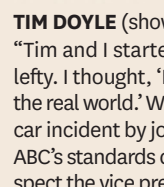
GARY NEWMAN (Fox TV Group chairman and CEO)

"There was a real bidding war between ABC and CBS. At the time, CBS was really the only network with successful multicams. But ABC had a history with Tim in *Home Improvement* and the *Toy Story* movies, so they had a huge investment in staying in business with him. Paul Lee made an impassioned plea, as did Bob Iger, who spoke to Tim and convinced him to do it at ABC."



PAUL LEE (ABC Entertainment president)

"When I first started at ABC in 2010, I was obsessed with getting Tim back on the network. We courted him hard. He has such a palpable charisma and the ability to make an audience fall in love with him. He brought multicams back to ABC and comedy back to Friday nights, along with a dissonant voice that we didn't have on the network that has resonated across the country."



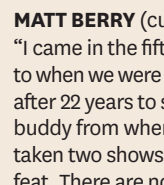
TIM DOYLE (showrunner/EP, seasons two through four)

"Tim and I started arguing about politics because I'm a huge lefty. I thought, 'Let's give Mike Baxter opinions that relate to the real world.' We wanted to play on the Mitt Romney dog on the car incident by joking that's how Obama transports Joe Biden. ABC's standards department said, 'That is unacceptable to disrespect the vice president.' There was tons of stuff like that."



DANA WALDEN (Fox TV Group chairman and CEO)

"That right-leaning, committed to their point of view character? Not really anywhere else on television. It was an underrepresented voice, particularly on broadcast networks. Strategically, that's who we're trying to appeal to, the underserved right-leaning audience. But it started organically with the fundamental bones of who Tim's character is."



MATT BERRY (current showrunner/EP)

"I came in the fifth season, but Tim Allen and I go way, way back to when we were both starting out as comics. It was cool for me after 22 years to suddenly land back on a show headlined by my buddy from when I was first getting going. That Tim Allen has taken two shows past the 100-episode mark is an extraordinary feat. There are not a lot of people out here that can say that."

